



Pandemic mystery: Scientists focus on COVID's animal origins

By LAURA UNGAR

Nearly two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the origin of the virus tormenting the world remains shrouded in mystery.

Most scientists believe it emerged in the wild and jumped from bats to humans, either directly or through another animal. Others theorize it escaped from a Chinese lab.

Now, with the global COVID-19 death toll surpassing 5.2 million on the second anniversary of the earliest human cases, a growing chorus of scientists is trying to keep the focus on what they regard as the more plausible "zoonotic," or animal-to-human, theory, in the hope that what's learned will help humankind fend off new viruses and variants.

"The lab-leak scenario gets a lot of attention, you know, on places like Twitter," but "there's no evidence that this virus was in a lab," said University of Utah scientist Stephen Goldstein, who with 20 others wrote an article in the journal Cell in August laying out evidence for animal origin. Michael Worobey, an evolutionary



Members of a World Health Organization team are seen through a window wearing protective gear during a field visit to the Hubei Animal Disease Control and Prevention Center for another day of field visit in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province, on Feb. 2, 2021.

Associated Press

biologist at the University of Arizona who contributed to the article, said he always thought zoonotic transmis-

sion was more likely than a lab leak but had signed a letter with other scientists last spring saying both

theories were viable. Since then, he said, his own and others' research has made him even more confident

about the animal hypothesis, which is "just way more supported by the data."

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

SUNDAY:	MONDAY:	TUESDAY:	WEDNESDAY:	THURSDAY:	FRIDAY:	SATURDAY:
TICO KOCK STEEL DRUM 4 - 6pm	ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	PAULA RIDERSTAP SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 7 - 9pm	RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 7 - 9pm	ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm
PAULA RIDERSTAP SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	Happy Hour 12 - 1 / 4 - 6 / 9 - 10	*** PREMIUM BRANDS ***	KARAOKE HAPPY HOUR 9:00 - 11:00pm	costa linda beach resort	WATER'S EDGE RESTAURANT & BAR	

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Locations: The Cove Mall (8:00 AM - 6:00 PM) Medcare near Courtyard by Marriott (8:00 AM - 2:00 PM)

Continued from Front

Last month, Worobey published a COVID-19 timeline linking the first known human case to the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, China, where live animals were sold.

"The lab leak idea is almost certainly a huge distraction that's taking focus away from what actually happened," he said.

Others aren't so sure. Over the summer, a review ordered by President Joe Biden showed that four U.S. intelligence agencies believed with low confidence that the virus was initially transmitted from an animal to a human, and one agency believed with moderate confidence that the first infection was linked to a lab.

Some supporters of the lab-leak hypothesis have theorized that researchers were accidentally exposed because of inadequate safety practices while working with samples from the wild, or perhaps after creating the virus in the laboratory. U.S. intelligence officials have rejected suspicions China developed the virus as a bioweapon.

The continuing search for answers has inflamed tensions between the U.S. and China, which has accused the U.S. of making it the scapegoat for the disaster. Some experts fear the pandemic's origins may never be known.

FROM BATS TO PEOPLE

Scientists said in the Cell paper that SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is the ninth documented coronavirus to infect humans. All previous ones originated in animals.

That includes the virus that caused the 2003 SARS epidemic, which also has been associated with markets selling live animals in China.

Many researchers believe wild animals were intermediate hosts for SARS-CoV-2,



The World Health Organization team is briefed outside of the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market on the third day of their field visit in Wuhan, China on Jan. 31, 2021.

Associated Press

meaning they were infected with a bat coronavirus that then evolved. Scientists have been looking for the exact bat coronavirus involved, and in September identified three viruses in bats in Laos more similar to SARS-CoV-2 than any known viruses.

Worobey suspects raccoon dogs were the intermediate host. The fox-like mammals are susceptible to coronaviruses and were being sold live at the Huanan market, he said.

"The gold-standard piece of evidence for an animal origin" would be an infected animal from there, Goldstein said. "But as far as we know, the market was cleared out."

Earlier this year, a joint report by the World Health Organization and China called the transmission of the virus from bats to humans through another ani-

mal the most likely scenario and a lab leak "extremely unlikely."

But that report also sowed doubt by pegging the first known COVID-19 case as an accountant who had no connection to the Huanan market and first showed symptoms on Dec. 8, 2019. Worobey said proponents of the lab-leak theory point to that case in claiming the virus escaped from a Wuhan Institute of Virology facility near where the man lived.

According to Worobey's research, however, the man said in an interview that his Dec. 8 illness was actually a dental problem, and his COVID-19 symptoms began on Dec. 16, a date confirmed in hospital records.

Worobey's analysis identifies an earlier case: a vendor in the Huanan market who came down with CO-

VID-19 on Dec. 11.

ANIMAL THREATS

Experts worry the same sort of animal-to-human transmission of viruses could spark new pandemics — and worsen this one.

Since COVID-19 emerged, many types of animals have gotten infected, including pet cats, dogs and ferrets; zoo animals such as big cats, otters and non-human primates; farm-raised mink; and white-tailed deer. Most got the virus from people, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which says that humans can spread it to animals during close contact but that the risk of animals transmitting it to people is low.

Another fear, however, is that animals could unleash new viral variants. Some wonder if the omicron variant began this way.

"Around the world, we might have animals potentially incubating these variants even if we get (COVID-19) under control in humans," said David O'Connor, a virology expert at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "We're probably not going to do a big giraffe immunization

program any time soon."

Worobey said he has been looking for genetic fingerprints that might indicate whether omicron was created when the virus jumped from humans to an animal, mutated, and then leaped back to people.

Experts say preventing zoonotic disease will require not only cracking down on illegal wildlife sales but making progress on big global problems that increase risky human-animal contact, such as habitat destruction and climate change.

Failing to fully investigate the animal origin of the virus, scientists said in the Cell paper, "would leave the world vulnerable to future pandemics arising from the same human activities that have repeatedly put us on a collision course with novel viruses."

'TOXIC' POLITICS

But further investigation is stymied by superpower politics. Lawrence Gostin of Georgetown University said there has been a "bare-knuckles fight" between China and the United States.

"The politics around the origins investigation has literally poisoned the well of global cooperation," said Gostin, director of the WHO Collaborating Center on National and Global Health Law. "The politics have literally been toxic."

An AP investigation last year found that the Chinese government was strictly controlling all research into COVID-19's origins and promoting fringe theories that the virus could have come from outside the country.

"This is a country that's by instinct very closed, and it was never going to allow unfettered access by foreigners into its territory," Gostin said.

Still, Gostin said there's one positive development that has come out of the investigation.

WHO has formed an advisory group to look into the pandemic's origins. And Gostin said that while he doubts the panel will solve the mystery, "they will have a group of highly qualified scientists ready to be deployed in an instant in the next pandemic." □



U.S. issues sanctions, visa bans to mark Human Rights Day

By BEN FOX

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. issued financial sanctions and visa bans on former and current government officials and entities in nine countries Friday — including China, Myanmar and Russia — as part of coordinated actions with Canada and the U.K. to coincide with International Human Rights Day. Canada and the U.K. joined with the U.S. in imposing the latest in a series of measures aimed at freezing military authorities in Myanmar out of the global finance system in response to the Feb. 1 overthrow of the democratically elected government and the violent crackdown on the opposition that has followed.

U.S. authorities simultaneously issued financial sanctions and visa bans on a broad array of officials and entities from the throughout the world, including Chinese authorities involved in the repression of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities and a Russian university that helps North Korea raise



Human right groups gather on the United Nations international Human Rights Day, Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympics 2022 in front of the Bank of China building in Taipei, Taiwan.

Associated Press

money with an abusive overseas labor program. "We are determined to put human rights at the center of our foreign policy and we reaffirm this commitment by using appropriate tools and authorities to draw attention to and promote accountability for

human rights violations and abuses, no matter where they occur," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in announcing the measures. The State Department action makes 12 current and former officials from six countries — Uganda, China, Belarus, Bangladesh,

Sri Lanka and Mexico — ineligible along with their immediate family to enter the U.S. under a law that authorizes banning people implicated in a "gross violation of human rights or significant corruption." A separate but coordinated set of actions by the

Treasury Department imposed financial sanctions and other restrictions on 15 people and 10 entities in China, Myanmar, Russia, North Korea and Bangladesh.

They included investment restrictions on a Chinese company, SenseTime Group Ltd., connected to the mass government surveillance operations in China.

The company has developed facial recognition programs that can determine a target's ethnicity, with a particular focus on identifying ethnic Uyghurs. "On International Human Rights Day, Treasury is using its tools to expose and hold accountable perpetrators of serious human rights abuse," Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adye said in announcing the measures. Two Chinese government officials who have been involved with the repression of Uyghurs and other minorities in the far western Xinjiang region of their country were among those banned from entering the U.S. □

U.S. approves Indigenous name change for Colorado mountain

DENVER (AP) — A federal panel has approved renaming a Colorado peak after a Cheyenne woman who facilitated relations between white settlers and Native American tribes in the early 19th century, part of a broader campaign to replace derogatory place names across the United States.

Mestaa'êhehe Mountain, which is pronounced "mess-taw-HAY," bears the name of and honors an influential translator also known as Owl Woman who mediated between Native Americans and white traders and soldiers in what is now southern Colorado. The renaming of what was known as Squaw Mountain, 30 miles (48 kilometers) west of Denver, comes after U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland formally declared "squaw" a derogatory term in November and said she

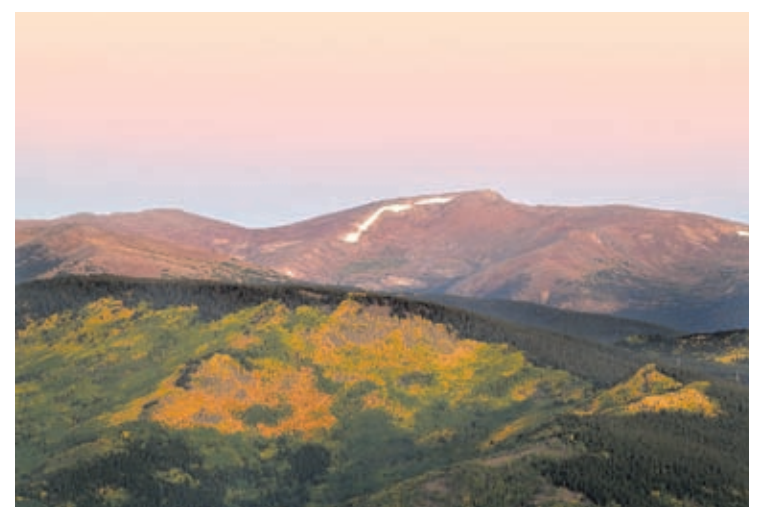
is taking steps to remove it from federal government use and to rename other derogatory place names. Haaland is the nation's first Native American Cabinet official.

Thursday's unanimous vote by the U.S. Geological Survey's Board on Geographic Names also comes as part of national efforts to address a history of colonialism and oppression against Native Americans and other people of color after 2020 protests calling for racial justice reform.

The word "squaw," derived from the Algonquin language, may once have simply meant "woman." But over generations, the word morphed into a misogynist and racist term to disparage Indigenous women. Earlier this year, California's Squaw Valley Ski Resort changed its name to Palisades Tahoe. The resort is in

Olympic Valley, which was known as Squaw Valley until it hosted the 1960 Winter Olympics. Tribes in the region had been asking the resort to change its name for decades.

The renaming to Mestaa'êhehe Mountain was applauded by Tenna Limpy, director of the Northern Cheyenne Tribal Historic Preservation Office and a leading proponent of the change, according to a Colorado Politics report. "A derogatory name that is meant to diminish the sacredness and power of our women is no more," Limpy said in a statement. "Mestaa'êhehe will be standing tall on that mountain for many generations to come, continuing to be a story of inspiration for all and perhaps a story that also inspires others to continue to learn other Indigenous cultures and lan-



A view of the Colorado high country is seen as autumn colors take over near Idaho Springs, Colo., on Sept. 25, 2019.

Associated Press

guages."

The name change of the 11,486-foot (3,501-meter) peak, located in the Arapahoe and Roosevelt national forests, is the first of several geographic name changes being considered by a state panel. Among them is 14,265-foot (4,348-meter) Mount

Evans, named after John Evans, Colorado's second territorial governor. Evans resigned after an 1864 U.S. cavalry massacre of more than 200 Arapaho and Cheyenne people, most of them women, children and the elderly, at Sand Creek in what is now southeastern Colorado. □

NYC lawmakers pass bill giving noncitizens right to vote

By **BOBBY CAINA CALVAN**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Noncitizens in New York City would gain the right to vote in municipal elections under a measure approved Thursday by the City Council that would give access to the ballot box to 800,000 green card holders and so-called Dreamers. Only a potential veto from Mayor Bill de Blasio stood in the way of the measure becoming law, but the Democrat has said he would not veto it. It's unclear whether the bill might face legal challenges. The Council's vote was a historic moment for an effort that had long languished.

Councilman Francisco Moya, whose family hails from Ecuador, choked up as he spoke in support of the bill.

"This is for my beautiful mother who will be able to vote for her son," said Moya, while joining the session by video with his immigrant mother at his side. More than a dozen communities across the United States already allow noncitizens to cast ballots in local elections, including 11 towns in Maryland and two in Vermont. But New York City is the largest place by far to give voting rights to noncitizens.



New York City Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, second from left, listens as Public Advocate and Gubernatorial Candidate Jumaane Williams, speaks during a rally on the steps of City Hall ahead of a City Council vote to allow lawful permanent residents to cast votes in elections to pick the mayor, City Council members and other municipal officeholders, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

Noncitizens still wouldn't be able to vote for president or members of Congress in federal races, or in the state elections that pick the governor, judges and legislators. The city's move could enflame the national debate over voting rights, particularly among some who wrongly assert that rampant fraud by noncitizens has taken place in federal elections.

Last year, Alabama, Colorado and Florida adopted rules that would preempt any attempts to pass laws like the one in New York City. Arizona and North Dakota already had prohibitions on the books. "The bill we're doing today will have national repercussions," said the council's majority leader, Laurie Cumbo, a Democrat who opposed the bill. She expressed concern that the

measure could diminish the influence of African American voters. Legally documented, voting-age noncitizens comprise nearly one in nine of the city's 7 million voting-age inhabitants. The measure would allow noncitizens who have been lawful permanent residents of the city for at least 30 days, as well as those authorized to work in the U.S., including so-called "Dreamers," to

help select the city's mayor, city council members, borough presidents, comptroller and public advocate. "It is no secret, we are making history today. 50 years down the line when our children look back at this moment they will see a diverse coalition of advocates who came together to write a new chapter in New York City's history by giving immigrant New Yorkers the power of the ballot," Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, a main sponsor of the bill, said in a statement after Thursday's vote. The law would direct the Board of Elections to draw up an implementation plan by July, including voter registration rules and provisions that would create separate ballots for municipal races to prevent noncitizens from casting ballots in federal and state contests. Noncitizens wouldn't be allowed to vote until elections in 2023. Even if de Blasio were to decide to veto the bill, there was enough support to override it. The measure would become law by default if the mayor decides not to act on it. Incoming mayor Eric Adams has said he supports the bill. City Councilman Joseph Borelli, the Republican leader, said a legal challenge is likely. □

Jan. 6 panel subpoenas six who helped plan Trump rallies



President Donald Trump speaks during a rally protesting the electoral college certification of Joe Biden as President in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

By **MARY CLARE JALONICK**
WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investi-

gating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection is subpoenaing six more people who

the panel says were involved in the organization and planning of rallies that aimed to overturn Donald Trump's defeat in the 2020 presidential election. The committee chairman, Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said some worked to stage the events and "some appeared to have had direct communication" with then-President Trump as they were planning. The subpoenas were issued to Robert "Bobby" Peede Jr. and Max Miller, who the committee says met with Trump in his private dining room on Jan. 4; Brian Jack, Trump's political director at the time; and rally organiz-

ers Bryan Lewis, Ed Martin and Kimberly Fletcher. The rallies before and during the Jan. 6 riot are a major focus of the committee's investigation. Committee members have said they want to know who financed the events and whether organizers were in close touch with the White House and members of Congress as they planned the events. At the largest Jan. 6 rally, on the Ellipse near the White House, Trump riled up the crowd and told them to "fight like hell." He said he would march to the Capitol with them, but he eventually returned to the White House.

Hundreds of his supporters who did proceed to the Capitol violently pushed past police, broke through windows and doors and interrupted the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's White House victory. Miller, a former Trump aide who is running for Congress in Ohio, said in a statement Thursday that he had received notice he would be subpoenaed and would accept it but also "defend my rights." "Upon taking office, I will make sure one of my first votes is to disband this partisan committee that has weaponized its powers against innocent Americans," Miller said. □

G7 foreign ministers meet with Russia, China, Iran on agenda

By JILL LAWLESS

LONDON (AP) — Foreign ministers from the Group of Seven industrialized nations are gathering for a weekend in Liverpool, with the British hosts seeking elusive unity to ease growing tensions with Russia, China and Iran.

U.K. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is due to greet U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other G-7 counterparts Friday evening ahead of two days of talks in the northwest England port city famed for its youthful energy, its soccer teams and The Beatles.

Concerns about Russia's troop build-up near Ukraine, China's muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific and lagging efforts to vaccinate the world against the coronavirus are on the agenda for the final major event in Britain's year as G-7 president.

The meeting of top diplomats from the U.K., the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan also comes as negotiators meet in Vienna to try to re-



Britain's Foreign Secretary Liz Truss arrives for a regional cabinet meeting at Rolls Royce in Bristol, England, Oct. 15, 2021.

Associated Press

vive an ailing international deal on Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Truss warned this week that the Vienna talks were "the last chance for Iran to sign up" to the deal, which was meant to rein in Iran's nuclear program in return for loosened economic sanctions. It faltered after then-President Donald Trump

pulled the U.S. out of the agreement in 2018 and Iran began ramping up its uranium enrichment.

In a speech at the Chatham House think-tank, Truss urged Iran to rejoin the deal, "because we are determined to work with our allies to prevent Iran securing nuclear weapons."

Truss also warned Russia

that a military move on Ukraine would be "a strategic mistake" with "high economic and diplomatic costs" for Moscow.

Russia was kicked out of the club of industrialized nations, formerly the G-8, after its 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region and assistance for pro-Russian separatists in eastern

Ukraine.

The U.S. and its allies are concerned Russia's movement of troops and weapons to the border region may be a prelude to a new invasion. Blinken has warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin had amassed the capacity to invade Ukraine "on short order should he so decide." The U.S. and its NATO allies say they will inflict heavy sanctions on Russia's economy if that happens.

Climate change, tensions in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan and North Korea are also on the agenda for a meeting that will include both foreign and development ministers from G-7 countries.

Unity among members of the group often proves hard to find. G-7 foreign ministers last met in London in May, issuing a statement accusing China of economic mischief and human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims, but offering little concrete action to deal with an increasingly forceful Beijing. □

Report: Trump slammed Netanyahu for congratulating President Joe Biden

JERUSALEM (AP) — Former President Donald Trump earlier this year lashed out with profanity at Benjamin Netanyahu for congratulating President Joe Biden on his victory in the U.S. election, an Israeli newspaper reported Friday.

Trump accused the former Israeli leader of disloyalty, saying he had helped Netanyahu in his own elections by reversing decades of U.S. policy and supporting Israel's claims to territory seized in war. Trump is still falsely claiming the U.S. election was stolen from him.

In interviews earlier this year with the Israeli journalist Barak Ravid, Trump expressed fury at a video Netanyahu circulated online in which he congratulated Biden.

"Nobody did more for Bibi. And I liked Bibi. I still like Bibi,"

Trump said, referring to Netanyahu by his nickname, in the remarks published by English language website of the Yediot Aharonot newspaper. "But I also like loyalty... Bibi could have stayed quiet. He has made a terrible mistake."

Netanyahu had congratulated Biden more than 12 hours after the election was called and after most other world leaders. Netanyahu did not refer to him as president-elect in the tweet, and followed it up with a post praising Trump.

Trump appeared to be particularly incensed by a video released by Netanyahu on Jan. 20, the day Biden was inaugurated, in which Netanyahu said he and Biden had a "warm personal friendship going back many decades."

"I haven't spoken to him since. F— him," Trump was

quoted as saying.

In a statement released after the remarks were publicized, Netanyahu said that he "greatly appreciates President Trump's great contribution to the state of Israel and its security."

Netanyahu said he "also greatly appreciates the importance of the strong alliance between Israel and the United States, so it was important to congratulate the incoming U.S. President."

Netanyahu was replaced as prime minister last summer after he was unable to form a governing majority in the wake of four hard-fought elections in less than two years.

The Trump administration took unprecedented steps to support Israel, including dropping objections to its settlements in the occupied West Bank and rec-



President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attend the Abraham Accords signing ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House, in Washington, Sept. 15, 2020.

Associated Press

ognizing Jerusalem as its capital. After proposing a Mideast plan that was adamantly rejected by the Palestinians, the administration brokered normalization agreements between Israel and four Arab states.

Trump said his decision to recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, which it captured from Syria in the 1967 war, helped Netanyahu ahead of Israeli elections in April 2019.

"I did it right before the

election, which helped him (Netanyahu) a lot," Trump said.

The Trump administration also withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, to which Israel had been strongly opposed. After he re-imposed U.S. sanctions that had been lifted under the deal, Iran began publicly exceeding the limits it had set on its nuclear program. Biden is now working with world powers to try to restore the agreement. □

UN: Afghanistan's economy is collapsing 'before our eyes'

By EDITH M. LEDERER

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The U.N. humanitarian chief warned that Afghanistan's economic collapse "is happening before our eyes" and urged the international community to take action to stop "the freefall" before it leads to more deaths.

Martin Griffiths said in an interview with The Associated Press on Thursday that donor nations need to agree that in addition to emergency humanitarian aid they need to support basic services for the Afghan people including education, hospitals, electricity and paying civil servants and they must inject liquidity into the economy which has seen the banking system "pretty well shut down."

"We're seeing the economic collapse being exponential," he said. "It's getting more and more dire by the week."

Griffiths said the liquidity issue must be settled by the end of the year and money must be funneled to front-line service workers during the winter, adding that he had to revise his earlier view that Afghanistan could get through the winter on pure



Two Afghan children sit next to a spigot as people of Kamar Kalagh village outside Herat, Afghanistan, try to fill their plastic containers with water, on Friday, Nov. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

humanitarian assistance because of the worsening economic situation.

As one example, he said, 4 million children are out of school and 9 million more will be soon and the reason is simple -- 70% of teachers haven't been paid since August. "And if we don't make that happen, all that discussion about the right of women and girls going to school becomes academic," he said.

"So, my message today is a

wake-up call about the humanitarian consequences of an economic collapse and the need to take urgent action," Griffiths said. The Taliban overran most of Afghanistan as U.S. and NATO forces were in the final stages of their chaotic withdrawal from the country after 20 years. Taliban forces entered Kabul on Aug. 15 without any resistance from the Afghan army or the country's president, Ashraf Ghani, who

fled. The Taliban initially promised tolerance and inclusiveness toward women and ethnic minorities but their actions so far, including renewed restrictions on women and the appointment of an all-male government, have been met with dismay by the international community.

Afghanistan's aid-reliant economy was also thrown into deep turmoil following the Taliban takeover. The Afghanistan central bank's

\$9 billion in reserves, most of which is held in the United States, were frozen and the International Monetary Fund blocked about \$450 million because of a "lack of clarity" about a new government.

The Taliban leadership has banned all foreign currency transactions and urged the U.S. to ease sanctions and release Afghanistan's overseas assets in order for the government to be able to pay teachers, doctors and other public sector employees.

Griffiths said the U.N. is asking the U.S. and other donors for money, which he insisted will not go to the Taliban but through U.N. channels to get directly to the people who need it -- teachers, doctors, electricity providers and other civil servants.

Griffiths said the consequences of Afghanistan's collapsing economy are becoming more apparent -- reports of hospitals without electricity, severe malnutrition and three or four children in one hospital bed, and tens of thousands of unpaid doctors, teachers and civil servants struggling to survive. □

U.S. envoy conveys concerns to Cambodia about Myanmar, China



Counselor of the U.S. Department of State Derek Chollet speaks during a round table briefing with journalists in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Friday, Dec. 10, 2021.

Associated Press

By SOPHENG CHEANG

Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) —

A U.S. State Department envoy conveyed concerns to top Cambodian officials on Friday about bilateral and regional issues, including the crisis in Myanmar and the con-

struction of Chinese military facilities at a Cambodian naval base.

The visit by Counselor Derek Chollet to Phnom Penh came days after the United States ordered an arms embargo on Cambodia, citing deepening Chinese military influence, corruption and

human rights abuses in the Southeast Asian country.

Chollet told journalists his discussions with Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn involved issues related to Myanmar and China, as well as the role Cambodia intends to play as the new chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, whose efforts to mediate peace in Myanmar have fallen short. Myanmar has become increasingly unstable since its army seized power in February, ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The military has sought to forcefully crush popular opposition to its takeover, which could end up plunging the country into civil war, U.N. experts have said.

Washington takes a hard line against Myanmar's mil-

itary-installed government, and has applied targeted diplomatic and economic sanctions against the ruling generals. ASEAN prefers soft measures when dealing with one of its members, and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said this week he plans to travel to Myanmar next month for talks with its leaders.

Chollet said his talks with Prak Sokhonn and other officials were open, workmanlike and constructive. He said he reiterated Washington's concerns about Cambodia's relationship with China that led to it applying the arms embargo.

"Unfortunately we have not seen the type of progress we hoped for since we have been registering these concerns, and I should say these concerns go back several years,"

he said. He described the links with China as not just a threat to the interests of the United States and the region, but also to Cambodia.

Beijing in the last decade has pushed hard to extend its influence in Southeast Asia, China is Cambodia's biggest investor and closest political partner.

China's support allows Cambodia to disregard Western concerns about its poor record in human and political rights, and in turn Cambodia generally supports Beijing's geopolitical positions on issues such as its territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Chollet said he also discussed the construction of new Chinese military facilities at Cambodia's Ream Naval Base, a matter of strong U.S. concern. □

55 dead after truck smuggling migrants crashes in Mexico

Associated Press

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ, Mexico

(AP) — Rescue workers arriving at a road accident in southern Mexico found a horrific scene: A tractor trailer jammed with as many as 200 migrants crashed into the base of a steel pedestrian bridge, killing 55 and injuring dozens. The migrants inside the tipped-over trailer were tossed and crushed in a pile of both the living and the dead.

In addition to the 55 killed Thursday evening, at least 52 were injured. It was one of the deadliest days for migrants in Mexico since the 2010 massacre of 72 people by the Zetas drug cartel in the northern state of Tamaulipas.

Volunteer rescuers removed the dead from the pile, while the living scrambled to get out of the twisted debris of the collapsed trailer.

One young man, pinned beneath unmoving bodies, wriggled to free the lower half of his frame, his face wrenched into a grimace as he extracted himself. Nearby, a man blinked, unable to move as he lay on the side of the road. Next to him was an older, stouter migrant whose lifeless eyes stared into the setting sun. While the Mexican government is trying to appease the United States by stopping caravans of walking migrants and allowing the reinstatement of the "Remain in Mexico" policy, it has been unable to staunch the flood of migrants stuffed by the hundreds into trucks operated by smugglers who charge thousands of dollars to take them to the U.S. border trips that all too often lead them only to their deaths.

Mexican President Andrés



Injured migrants are cared for on the side of the road next to the overturned truck on which they were traveling near Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas state, Mexico, Dec. 9, 2021.

Associated Press

Manuel López Obrador said such cases are painful. "We have been insisting that the causes that originate these unfortunate events must be addressed," he said at his morning news conference.

López Obrador said he has been insisting with U.S. President Joe Biden that the immigration situation is urgent, but that the U.S. government is moving slowly. The most severely injured from the accident were carried to plastic sheets on the road. Those who could walk were led, stunned, to the same sheets. Ambulances, cars and pickup trucks were pressed into ferrying the injured to hospitals.

Later, the dead were covered in white sheets, side by side, on the highway. Rescue workers who first arrived said other migrants who had been on the truck when it crashed had fled for fear of being detained by immigration agents. One paramedic said some of those who hurried into surrounding neighborhoods were bloodied or bruised but still limped away in their desperation to escape.

About 200 migrants may have been packed into the truck, said Guatemala's top human rights official, Jordán Rodas. That num-

ber is not unusual for migrant smuggling operations in Mexico, and the weight of the load combined with speed and a nearby curve may have been enough to throw the truck off balance, authorities said.

Luis Manuel Moreno, head of the Chiapas state civil defense office, said about 21 were seriously injured and were taken to hospitals. The federal Attorney General's Office said three were critically injured in the crash, which happened on a highway leading from the Guatemalan border toward the Chiapas state capital.

Sitting beside the overturned trailer, Celso Pacheco of Guatemala said the truck felt like it was speeding and then seemed out of control.

Most aboard were from Guatemala and Honduras, he said, estimating eight to 10 young children among them. He said he was trying to reach the United States, but now expected to be deported to Guatemala. Authorities said there also were migrants from Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Mexico aboard.

Marco Antonio Sánchez, director of the Chiapas Firefighter Institute, said ambulances brought victims to three hospitals, three or

four at a time.

When there weren't enough ambulances, they loaded them into pickup trucks, he said.

Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei tweeted: "I deeply regret the tragedy in Chiapas state, and I express my solidarity for the victims' families, to whom we will offer all the necessary consular assistance, including repatriation."

Pope Francis, who visited Chiapas in 2015 and has made the plight of migrants a hallmark of his papacy, sent a telegram of condolences Friday to the archbishop of Tuxtla Gutierrez, offering prayers for the dead and their families, and for the injured.

The truck had originally been a closed freight module of the kind used to carry perishable goods. The container was smashed open by the impact. It was unclear if the driver survived. Those who spoke to survivors said they told of boarding the truck in Mexico, near the border with Guatemala, and of paying between \$2,500 and \$3,500 to be taken to Mexico's central state of Puebla. Once there, they would presumably have contracted with another set of smugglers to take them to the U.S. bor-

der.

In recent months, Mexican authorities have tried to block migrants from walking in large groups toward the U.S. border, but the clandestine and illicit flow has continued.

In October, in one of the largest busts in recent memory, authorities in the northern border state of Tamaulipas found 652 mainly Central American migrants jammed into a convoy of six cargo trucks heading toward the U.S. border.

Irineo Mujica, an activist who is leading about 400 migrants on a nearly 1 1/2-month march across southern Mexico, blamed Thursday's tragedy on Mexico cracking down on migrant caravans.

Mujica and his group had almost reached the outskirts of Mexico City, after weeks of dealing with National Guard officers who tried to block the march. Mujica said the group would stop and offer prayers for the dead migrants.

"These policies that kill us, that murder us, is what leads to this type of tragedy," Mujica said.

In fact, they are two very different groups. Caravans generally attract migrants who don't have the thousands of dollars needed to pay smugglers.

Migrants involved in serious accidents are often allowed to stay in Mexico at least temporarily because they are considered witnesses to and victims of a crime, and Mexico's National Immigration Institute said it would offer humanitarian visas to the survivors. The agency also said the Mexican government would help identify the dead and cover funeral costs or repatriation of the remains.

Mass deaths of migrants are something that President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has been desperate to avoid, even as his administration has accepted requests from the U.S. government to stem the flow of migrants moving north.

"It is very painful," he tweeted about the crash. □



New beginnings after the kitchen table and beyond with new restaurant: Infini by Chef Urvin Croes

PALM BEACH — After spearheading The Kitchen Table for five years, receiving notable recognitions in USA Today, The Daily Meal and earning the #1 spot on Tripadvisor's list of Fine Dining Restaurants in the Caribbean, Chef Urvin Croes has now moved on to higher heights. Infini, his new chef's table, which opened at the Blue Residences in November 2020, allows the Michelin-trained Aruban culinary artist to create gastronomic experiences unconfined by cultural or regional expectations. The former The Kitchen Table space has since been renovated into a suitable culinary studio to host this vision. In describing these changes, Croes says: "We opened up the entire kitchen and elevated the dining tables so guests have a front row stadium-like view of each step of the preparations. The spotlights, which we carefully choreograph, follow the plates' transition from blank canvas into culinary works of art."

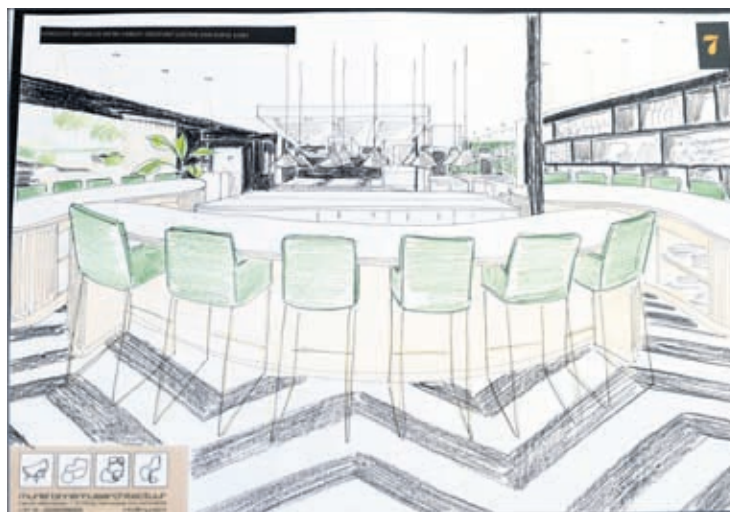
"It is a flavor that you cannot define, but you can create."

He had been sitting on the first menu for over a year. Inspired by umami, one of the five basic tastes, and also Japanese for "essence of deliciousness", Chef Croes strived to organically produce this palate in each dish of the eight-course Chef's Impression. "It is a flavor that you cannot define, but you can create. Take our popular langoustine for example; we combined elements that are rarely paired together: the bitter, sour and salty flavors of the lemon cream, kombucha, green grapes, watercress and achiote, fused with the sweet and delicate taste of the langoustine induce ultimate umami."

After hosting the first menu for three months, the Executive Chef introduced a second tour de force in February 2021 — this time a pescatarian menu dedicated to Lent, of which Croes has to say: "I wanted to focus on the finest fish in the world, they are the protagonists of this season." Visitors can experience the second Chef's Impression until May 2021, at which point Croes and his team will reveal exciting new flavors for the summer.

"Without a great team, there is no great chef"

"There is very little I can do by myself. Without a great team, there is no great chef", says Croes, while raving about the six young professionals sharing his kitchen. All graduates of Aruba's EPI College and familiar faces to the Chef as each one has completed their culinary internship under his guidance. In fact, Infini's Chef de Cuisine, Ashwin Maduro, was Urvin's very first student, before relocating to Amsterdam, where he worked at



several Michelin-starred restaurants, including &moshik (formally &Samhoud Places). Having recently returned to Aruba, Chef Maduro is thrilled to be reunited with his first mentor and hopes to secure Aruba's space on the global map of unique culinary experiences. Similarly, after four years working in the two-Michelin starred restaurant Spectrum, Chef de Partie Moises Ramirez returned home to share his vast experience in formulating recipes with

meticulous attention to detail and consistency. Further down the kitchen line, Chef de Partie Alvaro Yi, who has worked at the two-Michelin starred FG Restaurant, is all about expressing himself through cooking and plating to create art that you can eat. Mixologist Marc-Anthony Rannis brings eight years of experience in the fine dining industry to Infini. His fine craftsmanship is displayed in the unparalleled wine pairings and signature cocktails, which include his personally homemade syrups, garnishes and fresh local ingredients. Maître D' and Junior Sommelier Jessica Theysen, who previously managed renowned Chef Dennis Huwaë's Restaurant Daalder in Amsterdam, is a true storyteller. From the moment she serves the Salinity welcome drink and the culinary tale begins, she takes you on an adventure around the world to discover never-before-tasted combinations. Then,



towards the end of the night, it is his time to shine — Pastry Chef Jean-Claude Werleman, that is. After spending the last two years perfecting his recipes in the Pastry Department of the Ritz Carlton Aruba, Werleman joins Infini to continue exploring his passion for experimenting with colors and bold flavors.

"It's time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own"

"The goal is to leave our visitors speechless. The look on their faces whenever they take the first bite says it all and it is priceless", shares Croes, with a smile. Reclaiming the spot of number one restaurant in the Caribbean is also in sight, but this time he will not stop there. "In the end, we want Aruba to be recognized for its culinary mastery. We have trained the best culinary artists right here on the island and they have proven themselves internationally in the most renowned kitchens in the world. Now it is time to show that Aruba is a culinary destination of its own. Who knows where that will take us; hopefully to infinity and beyond."

Infini located at Blue Residences currently serves an eight-course Chef's Impression to up to 21 guests starting at 6:30PM. To make reservations visit www.infiniaruba.com or call +297-699-3982. □

infini
by Urvin Croes

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PALM BEACH - Don't spend a single moment of your long awaited holiday in Aruba thinking about your return testing. The Covid Test Center Aruba located at the Paseo Herencia Mall is your travel ally. Just sit back and relax knowing that, when the time comes, their professional staff will make this process a breeze for you. No need to make an appointment or dread the nasal swab; you'll be done with it in a matter of minutes and back to fun stuff.

Some regions require proof or certification of negative COVID-19 status before allowing people into or out of the country. With rules and guidelines varying greatly from country to country, the safest approach is to have recent proof you are COVID-19 negative before you get to the airport. Covid Test Center @ Paseo provides both PCR and Antigen type testing with results within hours; and both are accepted by the CDC.

Covid Test Center @ Paseo is conveniently located at the Paseo Herencia Mall in the heart of the Palm Beach Strip and right across from the Playa Linda and Holiday Inn hotels; only two doors from T.G.I. Friday's. We are open seven days a week, between 9 am and 9 pm. This gives you the choice to walk in when it better suits



you. It can be at the start or at the end of your day. No appointment needed here. The friendly technicians at Covid Test Center @ Paseo will take your information as we are aware it is imperative that this shows accurately on the results. For a seamless process, please verify that you have provided the correct email to deliver the certificate. Said certificate can be printed at our offices should you wish to do so.

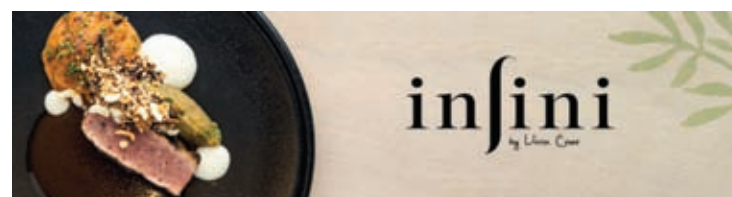
We understand that nobody enjoys doing a nasal swab. That is why we take pride in our reputation of being the gentlest swabbers on the island. First, we will not rush you just to go to the next in line. Through clear given instructions we want you to feel comfortable. When you are ready, we will promptly but tenderly take a proper sample. Many elsewhere traumatized people praise the difference it makes to test with us.

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A PCR test costs \$75 and results are ready the next day, while Antigen test costs \$35 with same day results. If you are staying at an off-high-rise area property, you can

benefit from the free parking our customers receive at the mall lot.). For more information follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. □



Taste limitless possibilities at Infiniti, where Chef Urvin Croes and his team explores without boundaries and steps with both feet outside of the box to create his most sensational dishes yet. This meticulously designed restaurant located inside Blue Residences on scenic Eagle Beach is a chef's table concept with limited seating where diners are able to interact with the staff and other guests alike throughout the evening.

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Who was L.G. Smith?

ORANJESTAD — Who is that man whose statue is in Oranjestad and after whom the city's boulevard is named after? This must have been a man of great merit for our island.

Lloyd Gaston Smith was born in Illinois in 1891. In the early 1920s he graduated as a technical draftsman. He went to work for the American Standard Oil Company, was quickly promoted and then was commissioned to design a refinery for Aruba. A subsidiary of Standard Oil, the Lago Oil and Transport Company, had established itself in Aruba with a crude oil transfer point from Lago de Maracaibo, the large shallow lake near that city, where there was an enormous supply of oil. The pumped-up oil was transported in flat-bottomed tankers to the nearest location with a suitable port, and that is why San Nicolas in Aruba was developed. This was realized by the first General Manager, Captain Rodger (Mr. Lago). As soon as the port and the transshipment site were in operation, they also wanted to add a refinery. As early as 1925, the Dutch government had obtained a 99-year concession to use 2,000 hectares south-east of San Nicolas for the establishment of a refinery and a residential area. Remarkably, this decision was taken at the start of the Great Depression, the severe economic crisis that broke out in 1929. The oil industry was then considered a safe investment. Remarkably, this decision was taken at the start of the Great Depression, the severe economic crisis that broke out in 1929. The oil industry was then considered a safe investment. Remarkably, this decision was taken at the start of the Great Depression, the severe economic crisis that broke out in 1929. The oil industry was then considered a safe investment.

Construction of the refinery began in 1928 and was completed in 1933. In addition to the refinery, a residential area for American staffers, known as Lago Colony, was also built. It consisted of about 650 bungalows, a primary and a secondary school, a Protestant church, a hospital, sports fields and a club building and open-air cinema. Two bays with beaches (Rodgers Beach and the Baby Lagoon) made the Colony a luxurious residential area, a kind of American enclave for the higher Lago staff. Everything had pre-

viously been imported, in the first years even drinking water. Lloyd Smith was appointed General Manager of the Lago in 1933. The family with 6 children came to Aruba by oil tanker and took up residence in one of the bungalows. The construction of a large management house, which was given the name La Casa Grande, Spanish for The Big House, was immediately started, with a view over the Baby Lagoon. The two-storey house was also to serve as accommodation for company staff who came to visit the refinery. The Smith family lived there until 1946. It was taken down shortly afterwards.

The personnel needed to run the refinery could not be found on Aruba, there was a veritable invasion of workers from other Cara and CARIBBEAN islands, especially the Windward, English-speaking islands. However, both these workers and those from Aruba itself had hardly received any training and had to be completely retrained for the work at the refinery. Smith, himself the son of a school principal, began an extensive training program that was mandatory for all workers. For example, many Arubans have

been trained to become skilled foremen, technicians, managers, office and hospital staff, and so on. The living standard of the Aruban increased enormously as a result.

Lloyd G. Smith's service to Lago and to Aruba in general is invaluable: he built an electricity plant, schools, the church and the hospital in the Colony. He also worked with the Lieutenant Governor (Isaac Wagemaker) in the 1930s and during the war to find solutions for the challenges of the time. The whole island benefited. As early as 1938, Princess Juliana came to Aruba and appointed Smith Knight in the Order of Oranje Nassau.

The outbreak of the Second World War, even though it happened so far away, had a significant impact on life in Aruba. The Lago refinery, at the time the largest and most modern in the world, produced a substantial portion of the fuel the Allies needed, which was one reason for the island to be wary of a hostile attack. Initially there was a Scottish regiment, then American artillery. That hostile attack came anyway, in the night of 15 to 16 February 1942. A German U-boat made an otherwise unsuccessful attempt to bombard the refinery but hit several tankers with torpedoes that went up in flames with a large number of victims. Lloyd G. Smith was very outraged by this attack on his refinery, which, with all the lights on, stood by like a Christmas tree. He ran out of the house cursing in the middle of the night and hurried to the pier where he smashed the lamps with stones. This quick action earned him the nickname The Flash. The damage to the refinery was not too bad, but it was the beginning of a fearful period for Aruba where embezzlement was mandatory from that day on. Smith kept its courage and guided refinery and personnel through these exciting years. In 1945, Princess Juliana came to Aruba again, this time to promote him to Commander in the Order of Oranje Nassau, an honorary title that is very rarely awarded to a non-Dutchman. The damage to the refinery was not too bad, but it was the beginning of a fearful period for Aruba where embezzlement was mandatory from that day on. Smith kept its courage and guided refinery and personnel through these exciting years. In 1945, Princess Juliana came to Aruba again, this time to promote



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In 1946, Smith was promoted to vice president of the parent company, relocating to New York; his departure from Aruba was regretted by everyone. In 1958, shortly after his retirement, Lloyd G. Smith died of a heart attack. In accordance with his wish, he was cremated and his ashes were scattered in the sea on the shipping route between San Nicolas and Lake Maracaibo. In his memory, a statue, well, a bust, was placed at the roundabout in front of the Cas di Cultura in 1960 and the boulevard from that point to Arashi was named L.G. Smith Boulevard. All this in recognition of his contribution to the success of the Lake, to the growth of the Aruban economy and unfolding of the island. □

Source: Historia di Aruba



Lloyd G. Smith 1945



Lloyd G. Smith 1945

Shell walks 'tightrope' of demands amid climate pressures

By **DANICA KIRKA**

LONDON (AP) — From now on, just call it Shell.

Royal Dutch Shell on Friday received approval from shareholders to simplify its archaic corporate structure, which grew out of the merger more than a century ago of a British firm that once traded in exotic sea-shells and an oil company in the Netherlands.

The changes will mean a single headquarters in London and one class of shares, instead of two, which Shell says will create faster payouts to shareholders and boost its shift to renewable energy amid criticism it has been slow to cut carbon emissions.

It comes as management resists pressure from some investors to break up the company into one business focusing on renewable energy and another for legacy fossil fuels.

The tensions illustrate the challenges oil companies face as they pivot from a business model that has generated huge profits and reliable dividend payments toward a more uncertain future tied to wind, solar and biofuels. With returns from the new ventures unknown, investors are demanding quick returns from existing assets, said David Elmes, an energy expert at the U.K.'s Warwick Business



The logo for Royal Dutch Shell appears above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, on Dec. 1, 2021.

Associated Press

School.

"They're walking a very difficult tightrope of keeping shareholders happy with the level of dividend and buybacks today versus getting permission from shareholders to switch investment from fossil fuels to low-carbon energy," Elmes said. "And it seems to be at the moment, that they're still having to pay an awful lot to shareholders today to get their support for the transition."

Until now, Shell has had two

separate classes of shares, one for its Dutch arm and one for its U.K. arm, which together comprised Royal Dutch Shell Plc, one of the world's biggest oil companies.

Shell says its new corporate structure will allow it to accelerate share buybacks. The company has already promised to return \$7 billion to shareholders as it completed the sale of assets in Texas and New Mexico to ConocoPhillips this year.

At least one investor is call-

ing for Shell to go further and split into two companies. Third Point LLC, a New York hedge fund, says it would allow both to run more efficiently, returning more money to shareholders and accelerating progress on climate change.

Shell's stock price has risen 16% in the past 12 months, lagging behind the 31% gain in Chevron shares and the 46% jump for ExxonMobil.

"You can't be all things to all people," Third Point CEO

Daniel Loeb said in a letter to investors. "In trying to do so, Shell has ended up with unhappy shareholders who have been starved of returns and an unhappy society that wants to see Shell do more to decarbonize."

Shell has said it has had preliminary conversations with Third Point and would continue to do so but wants its fossil fuel businesses to fund the transition.

Other European energy companies have opted to spin off their renewable businesses. In October, Rome-based Eni said it was planning an initial public offering of that business. Spain's Repsol is reportedly considering a similar move for its low-carbon assets.

The pressure for oil companies to shift away from fossil fuels has increased rapidly since the 2015 Paris climate agreement set a goal of limiting global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

Shell Chief Executive Ben van Beurden has made it clear that he wants the company to remain competitive in a world that gets more of its energy from renewable sources. The company last year set a target for achieving net-zero carbon emissions from both its operations and the products it sells by 2050. □

Lawmakers say they will try again to regulate airline fees

WASHINGTON (AP) — Several congressional Democrats are reviving legislation to regulate fees that airlines charge for things such as checking a bag, changing a flight or picking a seat.

The legislation would require that fees be "reasonable and proportional" to the airline's cost of providing the service. It will also require airlines to let children under 14 sit with family members at no extra charge.

One of the bill supporters, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., accused the airlines of "robbery in the skies — taking fees and

charges for stuff that costs them nothing." He said airlines can charge high fees because Congress hasn't stopped them from doing so.

Airlines say fees have kept fares lower for people who don't want the services that are covered by the fees.

Airlines "offer a robust variety of air-travel options, giving passengers the ability to choose the services that best fit their individual needs and preferences," said Carter Yang, a spokesman for the trade group Airlines for America.

Prospects for the legislation are uncertain. Similar bills

have failed to get through Congress, and one of the most despised fees has largely disappeared: Most U.S. airlines dropped ticket-change fees after the pandemic devastated air travel last year.

The fees, which ranged up to \$200 for changing or canceling a domestic flight, made some consumers reluctant to book a flight during uncertainty around COVID-19 rates and travel restrictions.

Most airlines, however, have kept fees to check a bag — usually starting around \$30 — or board the plane early or select certain more-desirable seats.



Travelers wearing protective face masks check-in their bags at Concourse D at the Miami International Airport on Nov. 22, 2020 in Miami.

Associated Press

U.S. airlines raised \$5.8 billion from bag fees alone in

2019, falling to \$2.8 billion in 2020. □

CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

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Yesterday's answer

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AXYDLBAAXR
is **LONGFELLOW**

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-11

CRYPTOQUOTE

K O U A I P Y F B A B T B I T R B
M O U K P I M J R V P U K O G U K O U
S I O J T K A U S V I X J K R B O S B I O B
Y I A Z I X G A M G F J I M O Z J R K C B
U T K J G I R J F I G . — S N B J R U Y
P K R I J N

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: TO SUCCEED IN LIFE, YOU NEED THREE THINGS: A WISHBONE, A BACKBONE AND A FUNNY BONE. REBA MCENTIRE

2 stars of 'It's a Wonderful Life' look back at a classic

By **MARK KENNEDY**

NEW YORK (AP) — It was just another job for child actor Carolyn Grimes. She was 6 and had already done four movies by the summer of 1946 when filming began on "It's a Wonderful Life." The only thing she recalls about the biggest movie of her career was being delighted to play in snow on the set.

That single job would become very memorable to a lot of other people. "It's a Wonderful Life," which marks its 75th anniversary this year, is now a beloved holiday tradition across the globe.

"It's a once-a-year pick-me-up for the humanity of America and the world," Grimes told The Associated Press. "It's a good impetus to really keep us going in a positive direction."

"It's a Wonderful Life" was released in late 1946, produced and directed by Frank Capra and starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed. It takes place on Christmas Eve in a small town.

The film centers on the character of George Bailey, played by Stewart, who considers suicide until his guardian angel intervenes and shows him all the people whose lives he has touched and the difference he has made in the community.

One memorable character is Zuzu, played by Grimes. She gets to say, "Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings." And the petals from Zuzu's rose stuffed into a pants pocket by Stewart's Bailey as he comforts his sickly daughter become a symbol of life.

If Grimes is sort of fuzzy on the filming details, Jimmy



This image released by Paramount Home Entertainment shows child actor Carolyn Grimes on the back of Jimmy Stewart in a scene from the holiday classic "It's a Wonderful Life," also starring Donna Reed.

Associated Press

Hawkins, another former child actor who played Tommy in the film, is the opposite. He recalls as a 4-year-old getting up while it was dark and taking buses and streetcars to Culver City to film his scenes.

"I have vivid memories of doing that film," he says. "On the set, Capra would squat down, eye-to-eye, tell me what he wanted me to do and did I understand it. I said, 'Oh, yes, sir.'"

Grimes and Hawkins are the last surviving members of the cast and have chosen to represent the film's legacy and spread its lesson of doing good.

"We feel we're lucky to have played those parts and carry Frank Capra's

message. He's not around to do it, and he gave us a great part and a lot of wonderful memories, so we just naturally do it, says Hawkins.

"We want to carry on that message, whether it's to inmates at Attica or ringing the bell at the Stock Exchange. We talk to everybody to keep it going." Paramount Home Entertainment has released a limited-edition two-disc Blu-ray set with a colorized version of the film in high definition as well as the original, digitally remastered black-and-white movie in high definition.

The set includes over 45 minutes of bonus content. The movie was nominated for five Oscars and has been recognized by the American Film Institute as one of the 100 best American films ever made. The movie also earned first place for most inspirational American Film of All Time by the AFI.

"It gives us such an optimistic view of what our lives can be. □

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Chinese astronauts give science lesson from space station

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese astronauts on Thursday beamed back a science lesson from the country's under-construction space station. The lecture focused on physics, aiming to illustrate how the weightless environment affects buoyancy, the movement of objects and optics. Students from five cities, including Beijing and the semi-autonomous region of Hong Kong, peppered the astronauts with questions about living conditions in space and were treated to a virtual tour of the station. The event was also open to the public through a livestream.

Wang Yaping, the only woman aboard the station, served as the main instructor, while Ye Guangfu assisted and commander-in-chief Zhai Zhigang worked the camera. Wang had taught a similar lesson while aboard one of China's earlier experimental stations in 2013.

The three arrived at the station in October for a six-month stay, charged mainly with preparing the main Tianhe module for the arrival of two additional modules named Mengtian and Wentian ahead of completion by the end of next year. Wang last month became the first Chinese woman to conduct a spacewalk when she and Zhai spent six hours outside the module to install equipment and carry out tests alongside the station's robotic service arm.

Their Shenzhou-13 mission is China's longest since it first put a human in space in 2003, becoming only the third country to do so after Russia and the U.S.

The three are the second crew on the permanent station, which upon completion will weigh about 66 tons, much smaller than the International Space Station, which launched its first module in 1998 and weighs around 450 tons.

Along with installing equipment in preparation for the station's expansion, the crew is assessing living con-



In this image taken from video footage run by China's CCTV, astronaut Wang Yaping, right, addresses children across different parts of China through video link from China's space station orbiting earth on Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021.

Associated Press

ditions in the Tianhe module and conducting experiments in space medicine and other areas.

China's space program was barred from the International Space Station, mainly due to U.S. concerns over its intimate military connections.

China has also pushed ahead with un-crewed missions, and its lunar exploration program generated media buzz this week when its Yutu 2 rover sent back pictures of what was described by some as a "mystery hut, but was most likely only a rock of some sort. The rover is the first to

be placed on the little-explored far side of the moon, while China's Chang'e 5 probe returned lunar rocks to Earth for the first time since the 1970s last December. A Chinese rover, meanwhile, is searching for evidence of life on Mars.

The program has also drawn controversy. In October, China's Foreign Ministry brushed-off a report that China had tested a hypersonic missile two months earlier, saying it had merely tested whether a new spacecraft could be reused. China is also reportedly developing a highly secretive space plane. □



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Analysis: 7 teams who have let fans down bigtime in 2021

By **BARRY WILNER**

A year ago, the Seahawks and Steelers were heading toward the playoffs. So were the Saints, Browns and Bears.

Now? Well, even if any of them stumbles into the postseason, the likelihood of doing any damage there is slim.

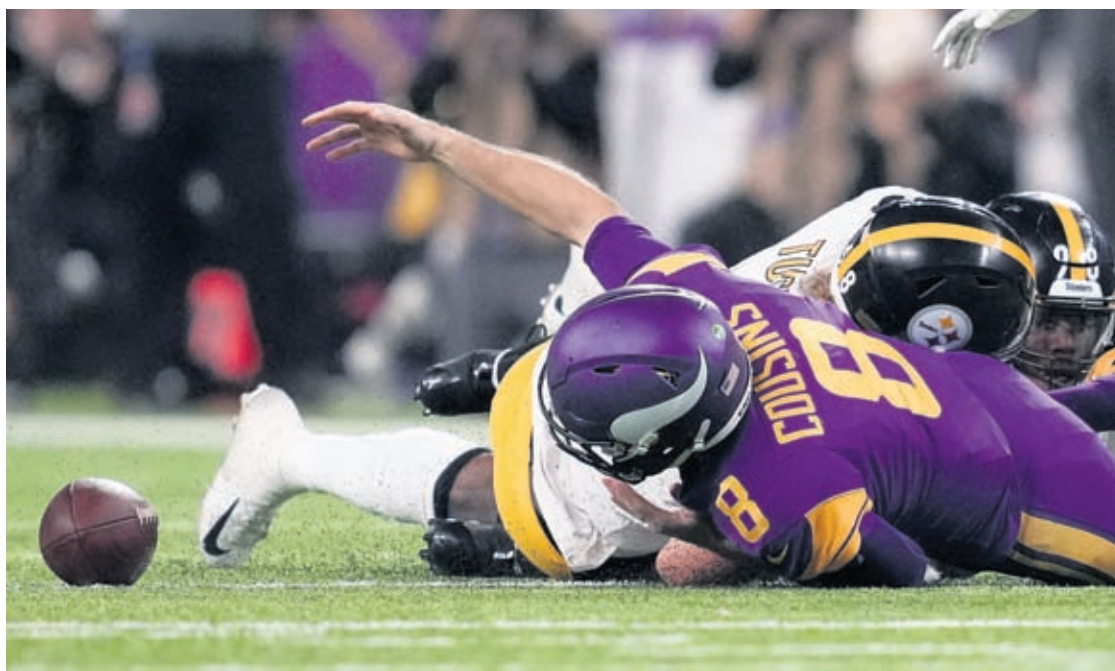
Those five teams have been particular disappointments in 2021, and they're joined by the experienced Vikings, who have more talent than they've displayed, and the Panthers, whose 3-0 start to the schedule has been blurred by their mediocrity and even ineptitude since.

"It's all about trying to keep it together throughout whatever you are up against," Seahawks coach Pete Carroll says.

Here's a look at where things have gone wrong for each:

NEW ORLEANS (5-7)

Life without Drew Brees didn't figure to be a Big Easy, but at least the Saints were prepared for not having him. The Michael Thomas saga has been especially disruptive and robbed whichever starting quarterback — Jameis Winston, now injured; Taysom Hill; Trevor Siemian — of the only viable receiving weapon. Losing do-everything



Minnesota Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins (8) loses the ball on a rush, as Pittsburgh Steelers' Derrek Tuszka (48) and Taco Charlton defend during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, in Minneapolis.

Associated Press

running back Alvin Kamara also has been problematic. The Saints are on a five-game slide that is their worst since Sean Payton became coach in 2006. Payton seems more annoyed at his defense.

"Just put the tape on," Payton said. "I don't think the effort's where it needs to be, either, just watching the big plays."

SEATTLE (4-8)

At 70, Pete Carroll is the NFL's oldest coach. The always-enthusiastic Carroll probably is feeling that old watching his broken

offense with no running game, a weak line, and an inconsistent Russell Wilson at quarterback.

At least the defense has improved recently under Ken Norton. Now the heat is on offensive coordinator Shane Waldron.

Injuries at running back, and to Wilson, have been damaging, but the spirit usually evident with Carroll teams has lagged.

CLEVELAND (6-6)

Some believe this is the AFC North's most talented team. So why are the Browns so mediocre?

Start with the passing game, which struggled when it had Odell Beckham Jr., and after he forced a trade. With Jarvis Landry, Kareem Hunt and solid tight ends, Cleveland should be a force with the ball. When it's using the ground game, it often is. But Baker Mayfield's up-and-down performances have stymied the air attack.

Edge rusher Myles Garrett has been terrific, but there haven't been enough defensive playmakers to support him.

PITTSBURGH (6-6-1)

As their Thursday night loss to Minnesota displayed, the Steelers can't win in the trenches. So uncharacteristic for this franchise, too.

Pittsburgh ranked 29th running the ball and 27th passing it through 13 weeks. A rebuild of the offensive line hasn't worked, and the defense has been damaged by injuries or illness for key performers such as T.J. Watt and Minkah Fitzpatrick.

"To be blunt, we are getting handled up front on both sides of the ball, and that makes it difficult, difficult to do what we desire to do," coach Mike Tomlin says. "Difficult to maintain balance. It makes it difficult to dictate to our opponents what happens and what happens next."

The Steelers have a knack for comebacks in games, but the way they fall deep into a hole early on has made them an also-ran.

CAROLINA (5-7)

The value of running back Christian McCaffrey was emphasized this season. He was available for the 3-0 start and hardly ever on the field after that. When Sam Darnold went from promising in those wins to flopping, getting hurt — and then being replaced by free agent Cam Newton returning to Charlotte — the Panthers plummeted. □

Michigan's Jim Harbaugh is AP coach of the year, Fickell 2nd



Michigan head coach Jim Harbaugh celebrates with his team after the Big Ten championship NCAA college football game against Iowa, Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021, in Indianapolis.

Associated Press

By **RALPH D. RUSSO**

AP College Football Writer

Michigan's Jim Harbaugh is The Associated Press col-

lege football coach of the year after leading the Wolverines to their first Big Ten title in 17 years and a berth

in the College Football Playoff.

Harbaugh is the first Michigan coach to win the AP Coach of the Year Award presented by Regions Bank, and the first from the Big Ten since Penn State's Joe Paterno in 2005.

"It's a tremendous reflection on the entire staff, players," Harbaugh told the AP. "Everybody shares in it. A rising tide lifts all ships."

He received 22 of 53 first-place votes and 103 points from a panel of AP Top 25 voters to finish ahead of Cincinnati's Luke Fickell, who had 16 first-place votes and 88 points.

Baylor's Dave Aranda was third and Michigan State's

Mel Tucker was fourth. Kirby Smart was fifth with a first-place vote and Utah State's Blake Anderson was sixth, receiving three first-place votes. Alabama's Nick Saban and Wake Forest's Dave Clawson also received first-place votes.

Harbaugh came into his seventh season as coach of his alma mater on a hot seat after going 2-4 in the Big Ten's abbreviated schedule in 2020. After his first losing season with Michigan, Harbaugh took a pay cut and had his buy-out reduced, putting the school in better position to make a coaching change if this season didn't go well. Harbaugh also made staff

changes on the defensive side of the ball in the off-season.

Everything came together for the Wolverines this season. They beat Ohio State to snap an eight-game losing streak in the rivalry and reached the Big Ten title game for the first time, where they routed Iowa.

No. 2 Michigan (12-1) faces No. 3 Georgia (12-1) in its first College Football Playoff appearance on Dec. 31 at the Orange Bowl.

"I love this team. I love this '21 team," Harbaugh said. "They've got a bounce in their step every day. They've got a smile on their face. They've worked incredibly hard." □

Shaq's shortcut: Buy Bill Russell's NBA rings in auction

By JIMMY GOLEN

AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Basketball fans hoping to buy something from Bill Russell's memorabilia collection should expect some big-name competition.

Hall of Famers Shaquille O'Neal and Charles Barkley say they're interested in bidding on items that Russell — a civil rights icon and the most decorated champion in team sports history — is selling off. An online auction with 429 lots began last week and will culminate in a live event at the TD Garden on Friday.

"I'd like to take some of that stuff off their hands," O'Neal said on TNT's "Inside the NBA" on Tuesday night. "To be able to have all 11 of those rings, nobody's out-bidding me on that one."

In fact, Russell is only selling two NBA championship rings — his first and his last — along with his Hall of Fame ring, one commemorating his two NCAA titles, another for making the NBA's 50th anniversary team and one the league gave him for winning the most titles in professional team sports history.

Also on the block are his Olympic gold medal, his final Celtics jersey, his honorary law degree from Harvard — along with the cap and gown he wore for the ceremony — and a scrapbook page with a signed letter from Jackie Robinson



The 1969 game worn jersey of Boston Celtics' legend Bill Russell is displayed along with other memorabilia set to go up for auction, Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, in Boston.

Associated Press

thanking Russell and four Black teammates for refusing to play in a 1961 exhibition in segregated Kentucky.

"What he's done for civil rights in this country is unmatched," Barkley said on the broadcast. "Him and (Muhammad) Ali will always be my heroes as far as that goes. It's easy to be a social justice guy now when you've got \$100 million, you're making \$30-40 million a year, but those guys did all the heavy lifting back in the day. I think I might look at that auction and bid on something."

The items, which have a combined estimated value

running into the millions, include signed shoes, shorts and shirts Russell accumulated during a career in which he won 11 NBA titles — the last two as a player-coach and the first Black head coach in any U.S. major pro sport.

The most valuable item — already over \$400,000 in online bidding through Thursday afternoon — is expected to be the jersey Russell wore in his last game, in the 1969 NBA Finals against the Los Angeles Lakers. But there are also quirkier items like an autographed Wheaties box, dozens of canceled checks, and seats and slices of the par-

quet floor from the original Boston Garden.

"There's no question this is one of the most significant athlete collections ever to come up for auction," said Hunt Auctions President David Hunt, who has also worked on collections from Babe Ruth, Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio and Roberto Clemente. "We've been very fortunate to work with some of the icons in sports. There's no question Bill is in that group."

Russell, who has been inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame as a player and as a coach, won two NCAA titles with San Francisco and the 1956 Olym-

pic gold medal as well as the 11 NBA championships in 13 seasons.

But he also leaves a legacy as a civil rights pioneer, marching with Martin Luther King Jr., and backing Ali when he refused induction into the Vietnam War. Russell received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011; it's not in the auction, nor is an autographed photo of him with President Barack Obama.

"You can obviously understand what that piece is worth to him," Hunt said. "When you've won every conceivable thing there is, you're able to keep things and still sell a lot of things. That's a blessing to be as accomplished as he was." Hunt said he went through the collection with Russell and was taken aback by the sight of Robinson's letter.

"To be able to sit there with Bill and have him tell the history of these pieces — to not only participate in sports history, but some of the most significant moments in American history — that's what's special, for me," Hunt said.

"You think about Jackie at that point in the country's history, and Bill taking that stand, at a really volatile point in the country's history," Hunt said. "When you come across a page like that, you sort of take a minute and process what you're looking at. □"

Full share on World Series champion Braves worth \$397,391

NEW YORK (AP) — A full postseason share on the World Series champion Atlanta Braves totaled \$397,391 from a record player pool of \$90.47 million.

The Braves split \$32.57 million into 66 full shares, 14.25 partial shares and 38 cash awards, the commissioner's office said Friday. The amount of the winners' share was the third-highest behind \$438,902 for Houston in 2017 and \$416,838 for Boston in 2018.

A full share for the AL champion Astros came to

\$258,373. Houston divided \$21.71 million into 67 full shares, 16.59 partial shares and three cash awards. The players' pool broke the previous mark of \$88 million in 2018.

Full shares this year were worth \$137,644 for Boston, \$112,701 for the Dodgers, \$43,729 for the Chicago White Sox, \$38,336 for San Francisco, \$33,973 for Tampa Bay, \$27,561 for Milwaukee, \$17,048 for St. Louis and \$15,928 for the New York Yankees.

The pool includes 50% of the gate receipts from the

two wild card games and 60% each from the first three games of each Division Series and the first four games of each League Championship Series and the World Series.

Major League Baseball never announced 2020 postseason shares following a postseason in which most games were played without fans because of the pandemic and limited crowds were allowed for NL Championship Series and World Series games in Arlington, Texas. □



Atlanta Braves' Adam Duvall hits a grand slam home run during the first inning in Game 5 of baseball's World Series between the Houston Astros and the Atlanta Braves Sunday, Oct. 31, 2021, in Atlanta.

Associated Press



Holiday Opening Hours

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Saturday	11 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Sunday	12 December	9:00AM - 6:00PM
Monday	13 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Tuesday	14 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Wednesday	15 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Thursday	16 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Friday	17 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Saturday	18 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Sunday	19 December	9:00AM - 6:00PM
Monday	20 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Tuesday	21 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Wednesday	22 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Thursday	23 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Friday	24 December	8:00AM - 6:00PM
Saturday	25 December	Closed
Sunday	26 December	Closed
Monday	27 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Tuesday	28 December	8:00AM - 8:00PM
Wednesday	29 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
Thursday	30 December	8:00AM - 10:00PM
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Saturday	1 January	Closed
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